Was Isaac or Ishmael to be sacrificed?

This article is a summery to many dialogs between Christians (C) and Muslims (M).

M. Why did Isma'il (Ishmael) and his mother Hajar (Hagar) leave Sarrah?

C. After Isaac was weaned, his mother Sarah saw Ishmael mocking him. After that, she didn't want Ishmael to be heir with her son Isaac: Genesis 21:8-10: "And the child grew, and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham: 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."'

M. Isaac was about two years old when he was weaned. Ishmael was then **sixteen** years is the profile of a baby, not of a teenager. So Ishmael and his mother Hagar left Sarah long before Isaac was born. According to the Islamic version, Abraham took Ishmael and Hagar and made a new settlement in Makkah, called Paran in the Bible (Genesis 21:21), because of a divine instruction given to Abraham as a part of God's plan. Hagar ran seven times between two hills, Safa and Marwa, looking for water. This is the origin of one of the rituals that is performed during the pilgrimage to Makkah. The well of water mentioned in Genesis 21:19 is still present and is known as called Zamzam. Both Abraham and Ishmael later built the Ka'bah in Makkah. The spot where Abraham used to perform prayers near the Ka'bah is still present and is known as the Maqam Ibrahim, i.e., the Station of Abraham. During the pilgrimage, pilgrims in Makkah and Muslims all over the world commemorate the offering of Abraham and Ishmael by slaughtering cattle.

C. But the Bible mentions that Isaac was to be sacrificed.

M. The Islamic version states that the covenant between God, Abraham, and his only son Ishmael was made and sealed when Ishmael was supposed to be sacrificed. On the very same day, Abraham, Ishmael, and all the men of Abraham's household were circumcised. At that time, Isaac had not even born: Genesis 17:24-27: "And Abraham was ninety years old and nine when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

A year later, Isaac was born and circumcised when he was eight days old: Genesis 21:4-5: "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him." So when the covenant was made and sealed (circumcision and sacrifice) Abraham was ninety-nine and Ishmael was thirteen. Isaac was born a year later, when Abraham was one hundred years old.

As you know, Kedar is a descendent of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13), and Ishmael is the the base for the Family Tree of Prophet Muhammad through Kedar. The followers of Ishmael, Prophet Muhammad and all Muslims, remain faithful until today to this covenant of circumcision. In their five daily prayers, Muslims include the praise of Abraham and his followers with the praise of Muhammad and his followers.

C. But in Genesis 22 it is mentioned that Isaac was to be sacrificed.

M. I know, but you will see the contradiction there. It is mentioned "shine only son Isaac." Shouldn't it be "shine only son Ishmael," when Ishmael was thirteen years old and Isaac had not even been born? When Isaac was born, Abraham had two sons. Because of chauvinism, the name of Ishmael was changed to Isaac in all of Genesis 22. But God has preserved the word "only" to show us what it should have been.

The words "I will multiply thy seed" in Genesis 22:17 was applied earlier to Ishmael in Genesis 16:10. Was not the whole of Genesis 22 applicable to Ishmael then? "I will make him a great nation" has been repeated twice for Ishmael in Genesis 17:20 and Genesis 16:10: "And the angel of the Lord said unto her [Hager]: 'I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."'

Genesis 17:20: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."

Genesis 21:13: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

Genesis 21:18: "Arise, lift up the lad [Ishmael], and hold him in shine hand, for I will make him a great nation."

Deuteronomy 21:15-17: "If a man have two wives, one beloved and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hash, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hash: for he is the beginning of the strength; the right of the firstborn is his." Islam does not deny God's blessings on Isaac and his descendants, but the son of promise is Ishmael, from whom arose Muhammad as the seal of the prophets.

C. Can you prove that Jews changed the name of Ishmael to Isaac because of chauvinism?

M. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says:

It is related that a renowned traditionalist of Jewish origin, from the Qurayza tribe, and another Jewish scholar, who converted to Islam, told that Caliph Omar Ibn 'Abd al-Aziz (717-20) that the Jews were well informed that Ismail was the one who was bound, but that they concealed this out of jealousy. The Muslim legend also adds details of Hajar, the mother of Ismail. After Abraham drove her and her son out, she wandered between the hills of al-Safa and al-Marwa (in the vicinity of Mecca) in search for water. At that time the waters of the spring Zemzem began to flow. Her acts became the basis for the hallowed custom of Muslims during the Hajj.

Encyclopaedia Judaica, Volume 9, Encyclopaedia Judaica Jerusalem, pp. 82 (Under 'Ishmael').

The testimony of the former Jew as mentioned hadith literature as quoted in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* reads:

Another proof of our speech [i.e., that sacrificed was Ishmael (P)] is reported by Ibn Ishaaq: "Muhammad Ibn Ka'b narrated that 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz sent for a man who had been a Jew then converted to Islam and showed signs of true Islam. [Before his conversion], he was one of their scholars [i.e., he was a Jewish scholar] So he [i.e., 'Umar] asked him: which son did Abraham (P) sacrifice? He replied: '*It is Ishmael(P). By God, O Commander of the Believers, the Jews know that but they envy you - the Arabs.*'

C. But Ishmael was an illegitimate son.

M. That is what you say, but not what the Bible states. How could such a great prophet as Abraham have an illegal wife and a son out of wedlock!

Genesis 16:3: "... and [Sarah] gave her [Hager] to her husband Abram to be his wife." If the marriage was legal, how could their offspring be illegal? Is a marriage between two foreigners, a Chaldean and an Egyptian, not more legal than a marriage between a man with a daughter of his father? Whether it was a lie of Abraham or not, it is stated in Genesis 20:12: "And yet indeed she [Sarah] is my sister, she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife."

The name Ishmael was also chosen by Allah Himself: Genesis 16:11: "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her [Hager]: 'Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction."' Ishmael means "God hears." Where in the Bible is it written that Ishmael was an illegitimate son?

C. Nowhere.

M. Long before both Ishmael and Isaac were born, Allah made a covenant with Abraham:

Genesis 15:18: "... saying Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the Euphrates." Doesn't the greater part of Arabia lie between the Nile and the Euphrates, where all the descendants of Ishmael settled at a later date?

Do you see also the difference that Abraham was called "a stranger" in Canaan but not in the land between the Nile and the Euphrates? As a Chaldean, he was more Arab than Jew.

That covenant was made with Abraham and Ishmael:

Genesis 17:10 This [is] my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

Genesis 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.